

The University of Chicago

ART AND ARTISTS IN BALZAC'S
COMÉDIE HUMAINE

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE
HUMANITIES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ROMANCE LANGUAGES
AND LITERATURES

1936

By

MARY WINGFIELD SCOTT

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I. His References to Art

In Balzac's Comédie humaine there are nearly sixteen hundred allusions to pictures and painters, to the character and life of the artist, or to painting and art in the abstract. The theme and setting of entire stories, such as Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu, Pierre Grassou or Le Cousin Pons, are taken from the world of painters or collectors. Many sculptors and painters, a few of them historical, a larger number fictitious, figure among the characters of many more of Balzac's stories.

Much material of interest is to be found in his other writings. Chief among these are two articles on Gavarni, a series reprinted under the title "Des Artistes," several early prefaces, and the reviews of Latouche's Fragoletta and of Borget's La Chine et les Chinois. Among Balzac's letters, those to Madame Hanska are especially rich in allusions to art. Constituting as they do during his latter years almost a diary, they tell what pictures exhibited at the Salon or seen during his travels had pleased him, and what paintings and objets d'art he was adding to his collection.

A study of the novels in chronological order reveals a surprising continuity in Balzac's preoccupation with art during the time when he was writing the Comédie humaine. Exception must be made of the years between 1832 and 1836 when there is a noticeable falling off in the total number of references to art as well as an absence of novels concerned with painters or collections. While an attempt to connect the years particularly rich in such references to art with Balzac's own life is hazardous, still, certain outstanding influences are rather obvious. We know that during the last twenty years of his life he was more or less intimately acquainted with a host of painters and art-lovers: men like Gavarni with whom he worked on newspapers, those who illustrated his works, like Johannot, Monnier or Bertall, the many who painted or carved his likeness, such as Louis Boulanger, Achille Devéria, David d'Angers, those who like Froment-Meurice executed (or neglected!) his fantastic decorative schemes, those

whom he met in the salons of Gérard or of Madame Mirbel, and finally those who were merely congenial friends, like Auguste Borget. In addition, he knew intimately such art-critics as Léon Gozlan and Théophile Gautier. The dates of Balzac's contacts with these and others is a study yet to be undertaken.

Easier to connect with his novels are his occupations at certain periods. In 1830 and 1831, for example, he was seeing a good many artistic people, notably the great draughtsmen with whom he worked on La Caricature. It was at this time that he wrote the articles "Des Artistes," also La Maison du Chat-qui-pelote, La Vendetta and, most important of all, Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu. Then follows a period sterile from the point of view of this study, broken only by La Recherche de l'absolu. This era comes to an end in 1836 with the first of several trips to Italy; the novels of the succeeding years, from the enlarged Chef-d'oeuvre to Pierre Grassou show the renewed interest in pictures which his travels seem to have aroused. From that time on, his interest does not really flag. Two causes are not far to seek: his trips to Italy, Germany and the Low Countries, often with Madame Hanska as cicerone, and the building up of his own collection. Such novels as La Rabouilleuse, La Cousine Bette and Le Cousin Pons are sufficient testimony to Balzac's preoccupation with art between 1841 and 1847, even without the numberless mentions of pictures in the Lettres à l'étrangère during that same period.

On seeing the large number of references to art in the Comédie humaine one is prompted to ask, "How are all these passages brought in? What part do they play in the different stories?" When the theme of a novel centres about a painter many allusions to art are to be expected. But the mentions of pictures and artists is not limited to such stories: the subject is touched upon in all but a handful of Balzac's novels. To set forth the different ways in which art is introduced is the next task that presents itself.

First, we have a large number of artists--Sommervieux, Schinner, Bridau, Sarrasine, Grassou, Steinbock, Lora, Bixiou--who appear in many novels, playing rôles of varying importance. Mingled with these imaginary characters are a good many artists from the real world. Pourbus and Poussin appear with the fictional Frenhofer in Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu. Girodet is a friend of Sommervieux: Chaudet, Regnauld and Gros, as well as Schinner,

are teachers of Joseph Bridau. The names of fictional painters are often substituted in the Furne edition, or even in the marginal notes on Balzac's own copy of that edition, for the names of contemporary artists, such as Bridau for Delacroix, in Ursule Mirouët (VIII, 213,¹ cf. Furne, V, 161) or Schinner and Steinbock for Meissonier and Gérard Seguin (Fausse maîtresse, IV, 12, cf. Furne I, 355). By these changes Balzac increases the scope, hence the reality, of his fictional characters.

Another connection of the Comédie humaine with the world of art is the dedication of many novels to painters and sculptors who were friends of Balzac. La Fille aux yeux d'or is inscribed to Delacroix, La Femme de trente ans to Louis Boulanger, painter of the well-known likeness of Balzac in monastic robe. Le Cure de Tours and La Vendetta are inscribed to two sculptors who carved portraits of the novelist--David d'Angers and the Milanese, Puttinati. La Messe de l'athée is dedicated to Balzac's close friend, Borget, and Honorine to the popular illustrator, Achille Devéria. Les Parents pauvres is dedicated to the well-known connoisseur, Michel Angelo Cajetani, Prince of Teano, who had been Balzac's cicerone in Rome.

Classified as another type of allusions to art are the passages referring to art in the abstract. Many of these merely list painting with other arts, or art with science, politics or other fields of human activity, or the artist with members of other professions. For example: "La poésie, la peinture et les exquis jouissances de l'imagination possèdent sur les esprits élevés des droits imprescriptibles" (Chat-qui-pelote, I, 47). Balzac was by no means averse to learned disquisitions in almost any field, hence it is not surprising to find encyclopaedic passages on artistic themes. Such is the discussion of the creative process in La Cousine Bette (XVII, 238-245). Passages of this sort often occur in novels not otherwise concerned with art: La Fille aux yeux d'or (XIII, 333), for example, contains such comment. Almost equally unexpected is the long disquisition on Raphael in La Cousine Bette (XVII, 96-97) or the feu d'artifice

¹References to the Conard edition (Paris, 1912-1935) unless otherwise stated, the titles being abbreviated as far as is compatible with clarity. Other editions cited are La Comédie humaine (Paris: Furne, 1842-1848), abbreviated as "Furne," and the Oeuvres complètes de H. de Balzac (Paris: M. Lévy, 1869-1876), abbreviated "M. Lévy ed."

of artistic memories with which Massimilla Doni closes.

More interesting than most of these passages, however, are the references to pictures used in furnishing (including collections of pictures) and to portraits. These are very numerous. Even more frequent are the comparisons of people and scenes to pictures. Perhaps the most interesting type of allusion to art consists in the passages devoted to the artist--his character, his life, his conflict with the bourgeois.

Later we must approach the subject from a different angle and attempt to classify into schools the many historical artists whom Balzac names.

Before summarizing his knowledge and comprehension of art, one must devote special attention to a novelette that occupies a unique position in his work--namely, Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu. The novelist's part in the composition of that story has given rise to a controversy so interesting, and its relation to Balzac's other comment on painting is so curious that this problem will be given special study in a second chapter.

It is within the group of comparisons of people to pictures that a large proportion of the references to art in the Comédie humaine belongs. Such passages occur just as often in novels whose theme is in no way connected with art as in those which have a painter or sculptor for hero. There are a dozen types of such metaphorical expressions. Some are really metaphors drawn from the language of art. Other images were evidently suggested by some picture or statue, though none is specifically named. Sometimes a person is compared to an artist. Or again, a scene, situation or individual is described as it would appear to an artist. People are compared to those posing or to those looking at a picture, a costume is likened to that in a picture. Most frequent and varied are those passages in which a definite person or place reminds Balzac of some painting.

Among the types thus hastily summarized, a frequent one may be termed Simple Picture Metaphors. Here no direct simile is developed, but words more definitely evocative of pictures or artists than the threadbare "tableau" or "peinture" are used to describe a person or a place. For example: "Vers le milieu de l'hiver ... le salon des Thuilleries contenait les divers personnages dont les silhouettes viennent d'être tracées" (Petits bourgeois, XX, 46).

More definitely suggestive of pictures are the passages in which a situation is expressed in art-terms. The sixty-five cases I have noted are so varied that it is difficult to choose only one or two examples:

Enfin la lettre de change peut se métamorphoser en vieillard chargé de famille, flanqué de vertus. Je devrais peut-être à un vivant tableau de Greuze, à un paralytique environné d'enfants, à la veuve d'un soldat, qui tous me tendront des mains suppliantes (Peau, XXVII, 178).

Other interesting cases of this procedure are found in Splendeurs, Part II (XV, 238), and in the abandoned preface to La Femme supérieure (M. Lévy ed., XXII, 499-500).

Landscapes or interiors are sometimes compared to those in pictures. Bette's room evokes the most striking of these passages. It is: "... bien reluisant de propreté, tout cela sans un grain de poussière ... un vrai tableau de Terberg où rien ne manquait, pas même sa teinte grise, représentée par un papier jadis bleuâtre et passé au ton de lin" (Bette, XVII, 111).

The two hundred and thirteen comparisons of persons to pictures, scattered through fifty-seven novels comparisons of individuals to pictures deserve a more detailed study than the rapid survey just made of other ways in which people, places and situations are expressed in art terms.

There is considerable monotony in the choice of pictures which certain types of people seem to call to Balzac's mind. A young girl is almost always compared to a madonna, an Italian madonna, or a madonna of Raphael. Only once is the resemblance worked out sufficiently to be more than a ready cliché. Of Esther Van Gobseck Balzac says:

Esther attirait soudain l'attention par un trait remarquable dans les figures que le dessin de Raphaël a le plus artistement coupées, car Raphaël est le peintre qui a le plus étudié, le mieux rendu la beauté juive. Ce trait merveilleux était produit par la profondeur de l'arcade sous laquelle l'oeil roulait comme dégagé de son cadre, et dont la courbe ressemblait à la netteté de l'arête d'une voûte (Splendeurs, Part I, Vol. XV, p. 46).

Old men are generally likened to "le Père éternel" (Peau, XXVII, 30), to paintings by Rembrandt (Gobseck, V, 383; Chabert, VII, 16; Séraphita, XXXI, 215) or to Charlet's many drawings of old men (Ferragus, XIII, 40-41; Double famille, III, 302). Children suggest angels (Paysans, XXIII, 33); women in full bloom recall either the "Venus" of Titian or the buxom beauties of Rubens (la Cibot, for example, Pons, XVIII, 50). A more

sophisticated type recalls the "Mona Lisa" or other heads by Leonardo. The young girls who do not suggest madonnas bring to Balzac's mind the sentimental illustrations which adorned the early nineteenth-century "keepsake" (Massimilla, XXVII, 390; Eugénie, VIII, 315; Début dans la vie, II, 461; etc.).

A few exceptions to these recurrent similes must be noted. Marguerite Claës is compared in some detail to the girls depicted by Flemish masters (Recherche, XXVIII, 196). Victorine Taillefer suggests: "... une de ces naïves peintures du Moyen-Age dans lesquelles tous les accessoires sont négligés par l'artiste, qui a réservé la magie d'un pinceau calme et fier pour la figure jaune de ton, mais où le ciel semble se refléter avec ses teintes d'or" (Goriot, VI, 412). A particularly evocative comparison is that of Bette to "une figure de Giotto" (Bette, XVII, 46), and, further on, to "une Vierge de Cranach et de Van Eyck ... un Vierge byzantine" (p. 183).

However, the choice of pictures in these comparisons is seldom so apt. Balzac seems to have had ready at hand certain clichés which he used indiscriminately for people of a certain age or social position. The comparisons to art are none the less interesting both for their number and for the mention to be found in them of specific painters and schools.

Almost equally numerous and as full of allusions to definite artists and their works are the references to pictures used in furnishing or forming parts of collections. Collections are brought into a dozen of Balzac's novels. The majority are introduced merely as setting: they play no part in the action. Such are the collections in Les Marana (XXIX, 64), La Paix du ménage (III, 348), La Femme de trente ans (VI, 186), Les Employés (XIX, 37 and 85), César Birotteau (XIV, 216 and 225), Un Prince de la Bohême (XVIII, 387), Modeste Mignon (II, 359) and La Cousine Bette (XVII, 88). Collections that play a significant part in the action of various novels are those belonging to Claës, Rouget, Vervelle and Pons. The sale of Claës' magnificent collection accumulated by art-loving ancestors is one step in Balthazar's ruin. In La Rabouilleuse, once Joseph has let fall a word showing the value of the pictures his uncle had so readily given him, Flore Brazier and her lover are quick to set the imbecile Rouget against his nephew. In Pierre Grassou the gallery of pseudo-old-masters foisted on the parvenu Vervelle by Elie Magus gives the

amusing scene where Pierre is solemnly led in to admire his own pot-boilers. The queen of Balzacian collections is that in Le Cousin Pons, a novel written at the period when Balzac was engaged in building up his own collection. The fictional importance of the galerie Pons can hardly be exaggerated, for it is the pivot upon which hangs the main action of the story. For the possession of this gallery the respectable Marvilles and the prosperous dealer Magus no less than the ironmonger Rémonencq and madame Cibot the concierge are ready to play high stakes of life and death. When he knows his pictures are lost, Pons himself has nothing further to live for.

Outside of these collections, there are many paintings or engravings used in furnishing. Although Mr. Bowen² has disputed the long accepted harmonization between Balzac's characters and their material surroundings, it cannot be denied that their pictures are generally in keeping with their personality or with their social position. Peasants cover their walls with color prints of popular legends such as the Wandering Jew or Robert-le-Diable (Illusions, Part III, Vol. XII, p. 378), while at the other end of the scale is the palace of Emilio Memmi adorned with precious paintings by Leonardo or Titian (Massimilla, XXVII, 379). Between these two social extremes one hears often of the engravings, military and sentimental, in the home of "the average man": "Le Convoi du pauvre," "La Défense de la barrière de Clichy," "Le Soldat Laboureur," Vernet's two scenes from Mazeppa, the "Souvenirs" and "Regrets" of Dubufe.

In several homes the pictures are more characteristic of individuals. The widow of a naval officer loyally has her walls decorated with prints of Le Brun's "Battles of Alexander" (Bourse, I, 400). Crevel's temple of bad taste is adorned with views of Switzerland, which he longs to visit (Bette, XVII, 134). A bizarre contrast between pictures and character occurs in La Femme de trente ans (VI, 186), where the outlaw adorns the cabin of his pirate-ship with masterpieces of painting.

There are in the Comédie humaine a large number of allusions to portraits. Of the hundred and twenty-four I have counted, some are merely comparisons of an individual to a well-known

²R. P. Bowen, "Balzac's Interior Descriptions as an Element in Characterization," PMLA, XL (June, 1925), 289-301.

portrait, some relate that a person posed for a portrait, some mention actual portraits that form part of the setting of a novel. Among these last many likenesses merely decorate a room, others serve as a sentimental reminder of an absent one; more rarely, a portrait plays a part in the drama.

With Balzac's characters, the sentimental significance of a portrait is often great. This is not surprising when one recalls the frequent allusions in his letters to the portraits exchanged between him and Madame Hanska: the mediocre copy of Daffinger's miniature with which he had to be content during M. de Hanski's lifetime, the precious original that was afterwards sent him, the Boulanger portrait of Balzac which reached Wierzychownia after so many delays. Besides, there were Balzac's countless schemes for having his own portrait, that of madame Hanska or of Anna done by various well-known painters--Meissonier, Ingres, Schnetz, Vernet.

In the novels likewise a portrait often serves as consolation for the absence of some loved one. Lucien de Rubempré finds Madame de Bargeton weeping over the likeness of her dead lover, who has fallen at Wagram with her miniature in his pocket (Illusions, Part I, Vol. XI, pp. 215-16 and 228-29). The abbé Birotteau makes a last stand to keep the portrait his friend Chapeloud has had made for him (Curé de Tours, IX, 236). In Une Ténébreuse affaire, Michu's reward of faithfulness unto death is to have his execution delayed in order that he may be painted by Robert Lefèvre and may know that his portrait will thenceforth occupy the place of honor at the château (XXI, 251, 252 and 263). In La Recherche de l'absolu, Titian's portrait of the martyred burgomaster Van Claës is not only the chief treasure of his descendants but serves as an ideal to them.

In several novels a portrait plays a more active rôle: it may even become a pivot in the plot, as Augustine's portrait does in La Maison du Chat-qui-pelote, Virginie's in Pierre Grassou, Zambinella's in Sarrasine and Philippe Bridau's in La Rabouilleuse.

After this too-brief survey of the pictures used in setting, let us next turn to Balzac's study of the artist himself. In the article "Aux Artistes" we find the following definition of the word "artist": "... ce mot ne doit pas s'entendre seulement du peintre, du musicien, du sculpteur, mais encore du poète et de l'orateur, auxquels nous ajouterons ... tout être assez heureusement organisé pour sentir les beaux-arts" (M. Lévy ed., XXII, 56).

More extensive definition occurs in the series "Des Artistes," published, like the slighter article, in 1830 (ibid., pp. 143-56). There Balzac makes lofty claims for the scope, power and immortality of the artist, claims often echoed in his novels.

Of the two critics who have studied Balzac's treatment of the artist, Paul Flat³ and M. Fosca,⁴ the former has, like Balzac, used the word in the broad sense of creator, including among artists such characters as d'Arthez or Camille Maupin. M. Fosca has limited himself to the painters, sculptors and architects. He divides the artist-characters, real and fictitious, into three categories, according to the importance of their rôles. The comparses are Gendrin, Laurent-Jan, Servin, Souchet and Stidmann. One might add Claret, architect for Crevel, and César's architect, Grindot. M. Fosca includes in his second category "ceux que l'on retrouve à plusieurs reprises, mais qui ne jouent pas de rôle au point de vue qui m'intéresse." In this group he places Schinner and Léon de Lora. There I should rather include Servin and Stidmann, and would add Poussin, Porbus and Girodet. "Le troisième groupe comprendrait les individus dont Balzac a étudié particulièrement le caractère d'artiste." These are Dubourdieu, Sommervieux, Bridau, Grassou, Steinbock and Frenhofer: I should add Sarrasine and Bixiou.

While this division is legitimate and interesting, I shall follow instead a chronological one, that is, study the development of the artist-character from the beginning of the Comédie humaine. Already in 1830 Balzac was preoccupied with this subject. The three novels of that year--La Maison du Chat-qui-pelote, Sarrasine and La Vendetta--whose scene is an artistic milieu, present artists who are but slightly characterized. Sommervieux is mainly described as a misfit in his wife's family: Balzac is more concerned with the conflict between artist and bourgeois than with an analysis of the painter's character. La Vendetta is taken up with the trials of two lovers more than with the denizens of the ladylike studio where they meet. Sarrasine, for all its interesting picture of an artist's education, contains rather a summary description of the young sculptor's actual character. A fiery

³Essais sur Balzac (Paris, 1893).

⁴"Les Artistes dans les romans de Balzac," Revue critique des idées et des livres, XXXIV (March, 1922), 133-52.

and ungovernable youth, he needs absorbing work as an outlet for his pent-up capacities.

In Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu (1831 and 1837) we have in Frenhofer the super-artist, the thinker who can create only chaos. The characterization of this painter and the ideas attributed to him are so important that they will be left for more detailed study in a subsequent chapter.

With Schinner, in La Bourse, we have a different type of artist from any in the earlier stories. He is Balzac's earliest sketch of a great painter, with many traits that foreshadow Joseph Bridau--his devotion to his mother, his kindness and delicacy of feeling, his modesty in spite of his outstanding rank among painters, his tireless energy, his honesty, his "fierté d'artiste."

For four years no artist figures among the characters Balzac was creating. Then, in 1837, Les Employés introduces one of a very different stamp from any hitherto described--Bixiou, the mordant, witty caricaturist, who appears again and again in various novels, a sparkling guest at parties, a disillusioned observer of society--never a great artist of the lineage of Schinner and Bridau. The interesting question of the relation between Bixiou and Henry Monnier has been so thoroughly discussed by Champfleury and, recently, by M. Marie,⁵ that it need not detain us here.

The character of the artist is shown by what he is not as well as by what he is. In Pierre Grassou Balzac has depicted a man who is an artist not by native gift but merely by dogged determination. His "moeurs tranquilles et rangées," his business-like habits with money, his performance of his duties as husband and citizen--all these qualities, which make him an eminently satisfactory son-in-law and friend, have little in common with the usual behavior of artists.

A great artist craving great excesses is evidently what Balzac was working toward in the character of Joseph Bridau, to judge from the "advance notices" of him in Pierre Grassou and in Les Illusions perdues, Part II. In Pierre Grassou, where he is called "un de ces talents excentriques destinés à la gloire et au malheur" (XII, 444), he appears as a sort of wild-man, the échevelé painter of Gavarni's caricatures. It is in this same

⁵Champfleury, Henry Monnier, sa vie, son oeuvre (Paris, 1879) and A. Marie, Henry Monnier (Paris, 1931).

character, though still more akin to l'homme fatal, that Joseph is presented in a long passage of Les Illusions, Part II (XII, 76-77). Both Les Illusions, Part II (1839) and Pierre Grassou (1840) were published before La Rabouilleuse (1841 and 1842) in which Joseph has his principal rôle. They seem to indicate that Balzac had already sketched Joseph in his mind as an artist of genius, whose emotions he would examine more deeply than he had done in the characterization of Schinner. Then, in La Rabouilleuse, Joseph had such an essential part to play as a foil to the terrible Philippe, that his sweetness, filial loyalty and nobility are not confused by any suggestion of wildness or excess. This explains, I believe, a certain inconsistency in the delineation of his character.

By no means all the painters or sculptors of Balzac afford as much light on the artist's personality as the ones hitherto cited. Most of those in M. Fosca's first two groups are very slightly characterized. Dubourdieu, however, who makes but one brief appearance (in Les Comédiens sans le savoir) is very vividly described. Having gone mad over Fourierism, he is taken as the typical peintre-philosophe, one of many who try to advance themselves by espousing some Cause. It seems possible that the striking picture of him was inspired by the painter Paul Chenavard, whom Balzac had come to know at the time when he was patching together Les Comédiens.⁶

More extensive and no less interesting is Balzac's last portrait of an artist--that of the failure, Wenceslas Steinbock. In the study of Steinbock is one of Balzac's most interesting passages, on the dangers that beset artistic creation (Bette, XVII, 238-245). If we seek in real life a model for the character and career of Steinbock, we must conclude that he is, like many Balzacian characters, a composite portrait. The reflections on the creative process were doubtless drawn from Balzac's personal experience, since they would apply as well to literary as to plastic art. Steinbock's talents as a talker were possibly suggested by that same Chenavard, whom Delacroix found an exhausting if brilliant conversationalist. A more direct genesis of

⁶Lettres à l'Etrangère, III, 214, 222, etc. Cf. Th. Silvestre, Histoire des artistes vivants français et étrangers (Paris, 1857), p. 114 et passim; also E. Delacroix, Journal (ed. Joubin; Paris, 1932), passim for the character of Chenavard.

Nenceslas' personality may have been the sculptor Elschœt, whom Balzac's housekeeper, madame Breugnot, was so anxious to marry that Balzac punningly calls her "la Chouette." This lazy genius is described in a passage of the Lettres à l'Étrangère (III, 320) that might have been taken from La Cousine Bette, so applicable is it to Steinbock.

Balzac never drew a complete figure of a great artist. That he destined Joseph Bridau for that rôle is evident: Joseph is given the foremost position in the new school, his character as first sketched is obviously intended to be typical of an artist of genius. But his personality is sacrificed to that of his brother, who dominates La Rabouilleuse. Just as there is no portrait of a successful scientist, poet or novelist in the Comédie humaine, only the Rubemprés, the Claës, the Canalis, failures, wrecks, or petty successes, so among the artists the memorable characters are the frivolous Bixiou, the mad Frenhofer, the feeble Steinbock. One must concede the partial characterizations of Bridau and Schinner and rest content to study the varied types of near-artist--Dubourdieu, Grassou, Frenhofer, Bixiou, Steinbock. These, with others less striking, show Balzac's preoccupation throughout his career with the character of the artist.

The Comédie humaine offers many vivid pictures drawn from artist-life--the boyhood of Sarrasine and of Joseph Bridau, the struggles for education of Grassou, descriptions of studios (the two most detailed are in La Vendetta and Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu) and of the Salon, in La Maison du Chat-qui-pelote and in Pierre Grassou. These expositions were the chief key to public notice. People flocked there, says Balzac, largely to be in the fashion, as the French have little real feeling for art ("Des Artistes," M. Lévy ed., XXII, 143 etc.). This "bourgeois" or "épicier" insensibility to art is shown also in several of the novels--La Maison du Chat-qui-pelote, César Birotteau, La Rabouilleuse, Le Cousin Pons.

But the artist must have a public, and connecting links with that public are the picture-dealers and the collectors. We have notable characterizations of both groups in the Comédie humaine. A number of experts and dealers are named in the novels, some identifiable in real life (Pons, XVIII, 140). The most famous is a fictitious character, Elie Magus. This Jewish brocanteur first appears in Pierre Grassou as merely a sharp

usurier de toiles, who buys the works of Grassou for twenty-five francs and sells them as old masters to the ignorant bottle-merchant, Vervelle. Magus is alluded to again in La Rabouilleuse (IX, 345) in the same capacity and character. In Le Cousin Pons both his character and his background receive a large development. He is still a sharp dealer, but he has become, too, a passionate tableaumane, one of those collectors "capables de s'avancer dans les terrains boueux de la police correctionnelle pour s'emparer d'une tasse, d'un tableau, d'une pièce rare" (XVIII, 147). Once a treasure is in his hands, he nurses it with passionate care, living in "un sérail de beaux tableaux" (p. 142).

Entre son lever et l'heure de midi, le maniaque usait le temps à se promener dans l'appartement où brillaient les chefs-d'oeuvre. Il y époussetait tout, meubles et tableaux, il admirait sans lassitude (p. 145).

Elie Magus is one of the most striking examples of a character developed by Balzac over a period of years: like Bixiou or Bridau his personality and life are changed to suit a new situation in which he plays a part.

A number of collectors are mentioned in various novels--three in Les Employés for example. Outside Le Cousin Pons, the only collectors whose rôle is more than incidental are Balthasar Claës and M. Vervelle. While Balzac's own pictures and objets d'art were dispersed after the death of his widow, his collecting-fever has received a lasting monument in Le Cousin Pons, written at the time when he was most preoccupied with accumulating treasures for the Rue Fortunée house. In that novel three collectors from real life are mentioned--Chenavard, du Sommerard and Sauvageot (p. 12). The first is probably that same Paul Chenavard already discussed in another connection. Du Sommerard was the renowned collector of things mediaeval, whose treasures formed the nucleus of the Musée de Cluny. Sauvageot has a particular claim on our attention, as he is generally considered the prototype of Pons himself. It is Balzac who first pointed out the resemblances that existed:

Entre Pons et Monsieur Sauvageot, il se rencontrait quelques ressemblances. Monsieur Sauvageot, musicien comme Pons, sans grande fortune aussi, a procédé de la même manière ... avec la même haine contre ces illustres riches qui se font des cabinets pour faire une habile concurrence aux marchands (p. 12).

But the likeness is not a photographic one. The actual plot of Le Cousin Pons is in no way modeled on the life of

Sauvageot, who outlived Balzac by ten years. Pons appears to be an amalgam of the musician-collector Sauvageot and the little restorer Moret, with whom Balzac first came in contact in the summer of 1846, when he had brought back from Italy several damaged canvases. Moret, former soldier of Napoleon and one-time pupil of David and of Gros, had given up mediocrity as a painter for prëeminence as a restorer. Balzac's relations with Moret and his admiration for him at the time he was writing Le Cousin Pons are evidenced again and again in his letters. It seems more likely that the character of Pons should have been modeled on this little old restorer than on Sauvageot, with whom Balzac had only a formal acquaintance.

Pons and Magus are the two most interesting of these hangers-on of art introduced into the Comédie humaine. But all of these small folk--tradesmen, connaisseurs, collectors, amateurs --are as necessary to the complete picture of the art-world as are the bright particular stars.

Having thus briefly glanced at the many ways in which references to art are brought into the Comédie humaine, let us approach the subject from a different angle and examine the various painters and schools of art which Balzac mentions. Most of these passages are concerned with either Italian, Dutch, Flemish or French painters.

A large number of Italian painters, ranging in date from Giotto to Carlo Dolci, are named. Three of these--Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci and Titian--are mentioned again and again, most of the others only two or three times. I have noted only a dozen references to early Italian painters--Giotto, Perugino, Bellini. The most interesting passage on a primitive is the comparison of Lisbeth to a Giotto figure, where the novelist enumerates: "... la chevelure noire, les beaux yeux durs, la rigidité des lignes du visage, la sécheresse calabraise du teint qui faisaient de la cousine Bette une figure du Giotto" (Bette, XVII, 46). Balzac's general attitude to primitives is best shown in a letter to madame Hanska after his Italian trip of 1837. Mademoiselle de Fauveau, the Royalist sculptress then living in exile in Florence, had made him go to San Miniato "pour voir les triglyphes [sic] primitifs, superbes, par rapport à la Trinité." But, he confesses, "je n'ai rien vu de tout cela," and he begs the blue-stocking Eve,

"Ne m'appellez pas commis-voyageur... à cause de cet aveuglement."⁷

There are far more allusions to Raphael than to any other painter mentioned in Balzac's work. I have counted 102 mentions of him or his pictures, scattered through thirty-seven novels. These passages vary greatly in interest, from the frequent banal comparisons of a beautiful woman to a madonna of Raphael to a detailed description of an imaginary work of his (Peau, XXVII, 31-32), and a discussion of many of his actual paintings (Bette, XVII, 96-97). Many individual works are named in various novels. The "Madonna della Sedia" (Pitti) is copied by Césarine Birotteau (César, XIV, 85), and is also recalled in La Recherche de l'absolu (XXVIII, 171). The "Sistine Madonna"--"la madone qui gèle à Dresde" (Massimilla, XXVII, 470)--is mentioned several times in César Birotteau, for it is an engraving of this picture that César presents to his "collaborator," the chemist Vauquelin.

Balzac greatly admired Raphael's "Maddalena Doni" (Pitti):

Oh! le Portrait de Margherita Doni [sic], par Raphaël! Je suis resté confondu. Ni Titien, ni Rubens, ni Tintoret, ni Velasquez, nul pinceau ne peut approcher d'une perfection semblable (Et, I, 387; April 11, 1837; cf. Massimilla, XXVII, p. 396 and Modeste, II, 18).

It is rather obvious that for the title of Massimilla Doni Balzac took this name and altered it by borrowing from Count Guidoboni-Visconti's family⁸ the more arresting name of Massimilla.

Other works of Raphael which he mentions are the "Madonna di Foligno" (Vatican: Massimilla, XXVII, 470; Bette, XVII, 96); "St. Cecilia" (Bologna), "The Transfiguration" (Vatican) and "The Vision of Ezechiel" (Pitti).

The passage in La Cousine Bette (pp. 96-97) concerning the charm of any artist's youthful works, names many actual canvases by Raphael. Balzac's approach to a painter comes out very well in that passage. He is immensely interested in Raphael, he is acquainted with a large number of the artist's paintings, and locates them all in the right galleries. The false attributions are of no significance; art-scholarship in his day was barely in its infancy. As to critical comment, il y a fort peu de chose.

⁷Lettres à l'étrangère (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1899-1932), I, 435. These will be abbreviated Et. I, II or III). Balzac's infrequent mention of early painters and slight enthusiasm for them is characteristic of his day (cf. Artaud de Montor, Peintres primitifs [Paris, 1843], p. 1).

⁸H. Prior, "Balzac à Turin," Revue de Paris (Jan. 15, 1924).

For Balzac, certain works have a charm which others lack--a legitimate approach to art, surely, but that of the enthusiast, not of the learned.

That Balzac should have admired a genius as remote from his own is not to be explained merely by his having followed the taste of his age, which proclaimed Raphael the greatest of painters. Even though his comments show no perception of the design-qualities in Raphael's work, they show that he enjoyed much of the spirit of Raphael--the sentiment, the seraphic quality, the feminine subjects of much of the artist's work. This reminds us of a side of Balzac's genius too often overlooked--namely, that he is the creator not only of La Cousine Bette and Le Père Goriot but also of Modeste Mignon, Mémoires de deux jeunes mariées and Séraphita.

Next to Raphael, the painter most often mentioned in the Comédie humaine is Titian, whom Balzac ranks among the giants, representing, with Raphael, the "beau idéal" of Italy (Modeste, II, 41). There are a number of imaginary Titians in the collections of Balzac's world, two of them extraordinarily documented (Rabouilleuse, IX, 393 and Pons, XVIII, 145), though I have been unable to ascertain the source (if any exists) of Balzac's information. The most striking passages on Titian are the comparison of Tascheron to one of his apostles (Curé de village, XXV, 103) and the paragraph in the same novel (p. 9) where little Véronique is felicitously likened to the child Mary in Titian's "Presentation of the Virgin" (Academy, Venice).

Over half the fourteen references to Leonardo and his work relate to the "Mona Lisa." Her enigmatic smile was the feature Balzac most remarked. He writes, for example, in Albert Savarus: "Francesca ne put retenir un faible sourire qui donna l'expression la plus ravissante à son visage, quelque chose de fin comme ce que le grand Léonard a si bien peint dans la Joconde" (III, 48; cf. Cadignan, XVI, 313 and Massimilla, XXVII, 387). There are several references to works no longer attributed to Leonardo--a "Hérodiade" (Gobseck, V, 394) and a "Charles VIII" (Pons, XVIII, 164). When one reflects that the first catalogues of the Louvre with anything approaching a critical point of view (Villot's) began to appear two years after Balzac's death, and when one sees the optimism with which pictures were attached, in all the books and catalogues contemporary with Balzac, to any

great name convenient, one is little disposed to carp at a novelist who followed the ignorance of so-called experts.

The numerous references to painters of the High Renaissance and Post-Renaissance make it evident that Balzac was, like most of his contemporaries, far more familiar with late Italian art than with Primitives or Quattrocentisti. Of Michelangelo's painting he has little to say, most of his comment being concerned with Michelangelo the sculptor. An interesting passage relates to his follower, Sebastiano del Piombo (Pons, XVIII, 164), à propos of a "Knight of Malta" in Pons's collection. The detailed description of this painting (p. 326) is really that of a "Knight of Malta" which Balzac had just acquired in Italy, the restoration of which he so graphically describes to Count Mnischev (Et. III, 349-50; July 29, 1846). He had also purchased a portrait thought to be a Bronzino, which the restorer, Moret, patched up as best he could (ibid., p. 324). Other sixteenth century painters mentioned by Balzac are Fra Bartolommeo, Del Sarto and Pontormo, Luini and Correggio. Several great Venetians, notably Giorgione and Veronese, are named, without any comment of particular significance.

Far more admired in Balzac's day than later was the school of art centering about the Carracci at Bologna. Balzac mentions a number of these painters--the Carracci themselves, Domenichino, Albani and Guido Reni. Domenichino's "Enfants entourés de fleurs," which he ranks among the masterpieces in the Louvre (Pons, XVIII, 167), was probably "Le Triomphe de l'amour" (No. 498 of Villot's catalogue). Two canvases attributed to Domenichino--an "Etablissement de la Fête-Dieu par le Pape" and an "Enlèvement d'Europe"--were among Balzac's purchases. The former is doubtless the painting called "La Communion" and described as "Composition importante" in the sales-catalogue of Madame de Balzac's collection.⁹ A canvas by Guido which he had also purchased Balzac describes in great detail for Jerzy Mnischev--"une Aurore du Guide dans sa manière forte, quand il était tout Caravage..." (Et. III, 352; July 29, 1846).

Two little-known Genoese painters whom Balzac mentions are Piola and the "prêtre génois dit il Capucino." The one allusion

⁹Anon., Tableaux anciens, objets d'art et de curiosité, bijoux, argenterie, garde-robe, Beaux meubles en bois sculpté, Tentures, Etoffes brodées appartenant à madame veuve Honoré de Balzac (Paris, 1882), No. 53.

to Piola is particularly interesting. Madame de Maufrigneuse is compared to: "... la madone de Piola, ce grand peintre génois, assassiné par jalousie au moment où il était en train de donner une seconde édition de Raphaël, cette madone la plus chaste de toutes et qui se voit à peine sous sa vitre dans une petite rue de Gênes ..." (Cabinet des antiques, XI, 67). The genesis of this remark is found on the back of a note written to Balzac during his stay in Genoa in 1837. There the novelist scrawled "Piola (22 ans) assassiné par Carloni enfermé dans San Ciro et l'Annunziata qui avaient droit d'asile où il a fait les travaux" and further over on the page he noted "la madone de la Strada dei Orefici."¹⁰ A local landmark with the picturesque legend attached to it, pointed out, doubtless, during a drive or walk through Genoa! The artist was Pellegro Piola, killed in a duel, and the painting so picturesquely located is his "Holy Family" in the Via degli Orefici at Genoa.¹¹

Other seventeenth century painters that Balzac mentions are Salvator Rosa, Carlo Dolci and Gaspre.

It is interesting to note how early in Balzac's career the references to these late Italian painters occur. Before his trips to Italy they, with Raphael, were the names he knew best. Even after his more learned acquaintances--the Milanese friends of the Guidoboni-Visconti, Mademoiselle de Fauveau, Prince Cajetani--had introduced him to the art of the High Renaissance, had roused his enthusiasm over the early Raphael or the work of Giotto or Bellini, he remained faithful enough to the gods of his youth to buy Domenichinos and Guido Renis. Perhaps it was because they were within reach of his pocket-book while Raphaels and Titians were not!

Almost as wide as his knowledge of Italian painters is Balzac's acquaintance with Dutch and Flemish masters. Rembrandt and Rubens are mentioned frequently; a number of others are alluded to two or three times.

Of the twenty-five references to Rembrandt I have counted, many date from the early novels, Les Chouans, Une Double famille, etc. Probably Balzac had made the acquaintance of the painter

¹⁰Lovenjoul Collection, A 319, f. 6.

¹¹Illustrated in J. de Foville, Gênes (Paris, 1906), p. 115.

in the Louvre, or from engravings. It is either his types of old men, or the lighting in his pictures which Balzac generally recalls (Becker in Séraphita, XXXI, 215, Chabert, VII, 16 etc.). Several paintings are specifically named--"The Angel Taking Leave of Tobias" (Louvre; Physiologie du mariage, XXXII, 114), "The Anatomy Lesson" (Grassou, XVI, 457); the engraving called "The Great Raising of Lazarus" (César, XIV, 341). There is surprisingly little general comment on the characteristic traits of Rembrandt's work, and only one allusion to his personality. This latter occurs in a letter to madame Carraud.¹²

It must be admitted that Balzac was most often reminded of Rubens by some buxom woman. For example, at Lady Dudley's ball, "l'oeil embrassait les plus blanches épaules ... celles-ci satinées, celles-là mates et grasses comme si Rubens en avait préparé la pâte" (Fille d'Eve, IV, 113). Though eight of the twenty-seven allusions to Rubens are of this type, various modifications of detail prevent these similes from being stereotyped formulae. The only canvases actually named are the "Descent from the Cross" (Antwerp Cathedral), a sketch of which Pons wills to his parish-church (Pons, XVIII, 283), and the "Battle of the Amazons" ("Bataille de Thermodon" Balzac calls it), at Munich, which is mentioned with admiration in Les Paysans (XXIII, 9).

The few general comments on Rubens do not lead one to think that Balzac shared Delacroix' great admiration for him. He lets Frenhofer call the Flemish master: "... ce faquin de Rubens avec ses montagnes de viandes flamandes, saupoudrées de vermillon, ses ondées de chevelures rousses, et son tapage de couleurs" (Chef-d'oeuvre, XXVIII, 11). In Les Petits bourgeois the difference between genius and talent is said to be that which separates Titian from Rubens (XX, 60).

A century ago the term "flamand" was used indiscriminately for both Flemish and Dutch painters. As a matter of fact, most of Balzac's comment on "l'art flamand" refers to the Dutch painters of the seventeenth century, exceptions being the allusions to the Van Eycks, to Mabuse and to the late Flemish painters Pourbus, Velvet Breughel and Van Dyck.

Practically all the remaining allusions to "l'art flamand"

¹²Balzac, Correspondance inédite avec madame Zulma Carraud (Paris, 1935), p. 275.

refer to the landscapists Ruysdael and Hobbema, the animal-painters Potter and Wouwermans, to the portraitists, and to painters of interiors, such as Ostade, Dow, Mieris, Metsu and Terborch. With these "Little Masters" of Holland, Balzac's acquaintance was wide, and his appreciation of them was acute. All of the above types of Dutch Art are represented in the Claës gallery with Ruysdael, Hobbema, Paul Potter, Wouwermans, Terborch, Dow and Mieris (Recherche, XXVIII, 144). Another collection containing many Dutch pictures is that of Josépha Mirah, where there are "deux paysages de Ruysdael . deux Teniers et deux Metz, un Van Huysum et un Abraham Mignon" (Bette, XVII, 88).

While Pierre Grassou does servile imitations of the Dutch masters, Léon de Lora is said to be renewing the achievements of the landscapists (Début, II, 369). The most interesting allusion to any landscapist is a comparison of the country around Nemours to that of Dutch paintings: "Ne faut-il pas être bien maître de poste pour s'impatienter devant une prairie où se trouvaient des bestiaux comme en fait Paul Potter, sous un ciel de Raphaël, sur un canal ombragé d'arbres dans la manière d'Hobbéma?" (Ursule, VIII, 4).

The apt comparison of Bette's room to an interior by Terborch has already been quoted. Of a "Café" in Douai Balzac writes: "C'est toujours les tableaux de Mieris ou de Terburg, moins les plumes rouges sur les chapeaux gris pointus, moins les guitares et les beaux costumes du seizième siècle" (Recherche, XXVIII, 199). Everywhere the atmosphere of Douai recalls a Dutch picture: one might easily imagine that the setting of Claës's story was suggested to Balzac by an afternoon among the Dutch masters in the Louvre.

One picture by Metsu plays rather a spectacular rôle in Le Cousin Pons. This "petit tableau sur bois" which Magus considered a diamond, is stolen by madame Cibot. She cannot dispose of it unless it is entered on Rémonencq's accounts, so the ferocious concierge quickly poisons her husband and marries the ironmonger.

The most detailed analysis of a picture found in the Comédie humaine is the description of Grassou's "Toilette d'un Chouan, condamné à mort," which is merely a pastiche of Dow's "Dropsical Woman" (Louvre; Grassou, XVI, 446).

Another type of Dutch picture to which Balzac often

alludes comprises the portraits of be-ruffed burghers and their satin-clad wives and daughters. These call forth three of the most striking descriptions of individuals to be found in the novels--the portraits of Becker (Séraphita, XXXI, 215), of madame Saillard (Employés, XIX, 52-53) and of Marguerite Claës. Of the latter Balzac says:

C'était bien la jeune fille flamande telle que les peintres du pays l'ont représentée: une tête parfaitement ronde et pleine; des cheveux châtain, lissés sur le front et séparés en deux bandeaux; des yeux gris, mélangés de vert, de beaux bras, un embonpoint qui ne nuisait pas à la beauté; un air timide, mais sur son front haut et plat, une fermeté qui se cachait sous un calme et une douceur apparentes (Recherche, XXVIII, 196).

This characterization prepares one for a certain single-minded, unimaginative hardness in Marguerite's conduct.

These three descriptions give one a clue to the particular appeal that the Dutch pictures had for Balzac, and the great interest of his allusions to the Dutch School. There is a fundamental resemblance between the aim and method of Balzac and those of the Dutch masters. Since the life depicted by them is a bourgeois life, and the portraits those of bourgeois, comparisons to people or settings from their pictures fit better into the novels of Balzac than the often far-fetched comparisons to the religious figures and more grandiose style of the Italian Cinquecentists.

Not only the subject and setting but the method of the Dutch masters is in harmony with that of Balzac. With beaver-like industry they built up in their detailed interiors effects similar to the painstaking descriptions of towns, houses or rooms that are vital parts of nearly every novel in the Comédie humaine. Finally, the characters in these Dutch pictures--whether broken old Goriots, gaunt Nanons or myopic madame Saillards--are the kind of people that Balzac painted best. To the Virgins of Raphael he yields orthodox enthusiasm, but among the Dutch burghers of the seventeenth century, in their homes, within their practical, unimaginative heads, he is in a country where he has won immortal citizenship.

There are a good many scattered references to the art of Germany, Spain and England. Balzac knew and admired Holbein, Cranach and Durer, Velazquez and Murillo, Hogarth and Lawrence. In Le Cousin Pons is a detailed description of a portrait, apparently imaginary, by Dürer (XVIII, 164). He had evidently seen

the "Immaculate Conception" of Murillo while it was still in Marshall Soult's possession (Peau, XXVII, 120). What a lesson in the changing knowledge and taste of the last hundred years that he should so often recall with admiration the saccharine maidens of Murillo rather than the Swedenborgian ecstasy of El Greco or the satanic human comedy of Goya!

The most interesting of these allusions to scattered schools of art are those to the art of China. There are several striking passages, the most detailed being found in Balzac's review of his friend Borget's La Chine et les Chinois (M. Lévy ed., XXII, 345-49). His allusions to Chinese art are peculiarly rich in comments on its character and essence--its cult of perfect workmanship, its use of the ugly and the grotesque, its decorative charm (see Fausse maîtresse, IV, 12; Splendeurs, Part I, Vol. XV, p. 70; Peau, XXVII, 20; Interdiction, VII, 189).

As is to be expected, Balzac's acquaintance with the art of France is quite wide, extending back even to that of the Middle Ages. He knows a few seventeenth-century painters, such outstanding men as Poussin, Claude and Lebrun. In Les Paysans (XXIII, 184-85) an interesting passage on the relation of figures to landscape seems to have been suggested by the works of Claude and of Poussin. The latter, mentioned in several novels, is a leading character in Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu; but the story Balzac there attaches to his name appears to be entirely fictitious. Mignard, Lebrun and Valentin are also recalled. "Boucher, ce grand peintre berrichon" of whom Dinah Piédefer chats (Muse, X, 74) is not the better-known eighteenth-century painter of that name, but Jehan Boucher, born in 1580 at Bourges, where Balzac had no doubt seen his work.

Among artists of the succeeding century, the group that most attracted the novelist were those painters of elegant frivolity, Watteau, Lancret, François Boucher, and the pastelists La Tour and Liotard. A fan by Watteau plays an important part in Le Cousin Pons. The description of it (XVIII, 41-42) reflects as successfully the charm of Watteau as it does the character of Pons. The whole episode of the fan is important in showing the gulf of incomprehension between Pons and the Marvilles, the art-lover and the philistines.

Other eighteenth-century painters whom Balzac mentions are Chardin, Largillière, Madame Vigée-Lebrun, Natoire, Joseph

Vernet, Lauterbourg, Allegrain and Vien (these three play a small rôle in Sarrasine). There are several references to Greuze.

Balzac himself possessed a work of this painter which he counted among the chief treasures of his collection. His enthusiasm is characteristically boundless:

Tant que vous n'aurez pas vu cela, vous ne saurez pas ce que c'est que l'école française. Rubens, Van Dyck, Rembrandt, Raphaël et Titien ne sont pas plus forts. C'est de la chair palpitante, c'est la vie ... (Et. III, 351-52: to Jerzy Mniszech, July 29, 1846).

Balzac's enthusiasm for eighteenth-century interiors is expressed both in Pierrette (IX, 39-40) and in Le Cousin Pons (XVIII, 11-12). That the source of the latter passage was a conversation with Moret is evident from a still unpublished¹³ letter to madame Hanska:

[Moret] a reconnu que les fleurs et les ornements étaient du fameux inconnu: Lavallée-Poussin, celui qui a inventé tout le Louis XVI, car le Louis XIV, le Louis XV et le Louis XVI procèdent de grands artistes. C'est Lepôtre qui a créé le style Louis XIV avec Lebrun et Baptiste. L'oeuvre de Lepôtre est colossale (Dec. 30, 1846).

This passage is an interesting example of the genesis of Balzac's comments on artistic themes. One can picture him drinking in the little expert's praise of his new toy, the Beaujon house thrilled by the new names to which Moret introduced him, and hastening to jot down the whole mass in the novel he was then writing, Le Cousin Pons.

The outstanding interest of Balzac's comments on eighteenth-century art is his enthusiasm over Watteau and his followers at a time when they were only beginning to be admired by a few amateurs, among whom were his friends Gavarni and Gautier.¹⁴ Is Balzac's taste reflected from this young group, or did his sympathy for the Catholicism and Monarchy of the Old Régime incline him to admire the art of that period also?

Balzac mentions a large number of the older painters of his own time, men who had seen their heyday under the Empire. The popular hack-workers, the Dubufes, the Vignerons, the Duval-Lecamus provoke brief but spicy comment. On a less commercial

¹³For the letters to Madame Hanska after August 20, 1846 I have used (thanks to M. Bouteron's kindness) the typewritten copies which will, we trust, soon appear in print as Volumes IV to VI of the Lettres à l'étrangère. No page-references are given for this material.

¹⁴For a sketch of the gradual growth of interest in eighteenth-century art cf. E. and J. de Goncourt, L'Art du 18^e siècle (Paris, ed. of 1875), Vol. IV, Postface by Paul Neveux.

level is Robert Lefèvre, who evidently typified for Balzac the painter par excellence of men's portraits. He paints Michu (Ténébreuse affaire, XXI, 252 and 263), Baron Hulot in uniform (Bette, XVII, 190) and Napoleon (Illusions, Part II, Vol. XII, p.67).

The majority of Balzac's allusions to artists of the generation preceding his own concern the David-Lethière-Guérin-Girodet painters of neo-Greek bas-reliefs. Concerning most of these men, whose reputation was waning every year, Balzac has frequent and interesting comment. That Lethière's "Mort des Enfants de Brutus" (1812; Louvre) greatly impressed him is evident from a long description of the picture in his review of Latouche's Fragoletta (M. Levy ed., XXII, 19-20). This bears study as an example of Balzac's approach to a picture. To make one experience a drama and know a civilization, to interpret the psychology of an individual--these are the aims of the painter, if we may judge from the comment on the "Brutus" and on Lefèvre's Napoleon just cited.

Even in the 1830's Louis David had become a symbol--the personification of the abandoned gods of Classicism. Since Balzac identified himself with the young enemies of that school, many of his allusions to David are colored by the frondeur spirit of partisanship. For example:

A cette époque [1805] l'école de David arrivait à l'apogée de sa gloire, tout se ressentait en France de la correction de son dessin et de son amour pour les formes antiques qui fit ... de sa peinture une sculpture colorée (Double famille, III, 275: cf. Pons, XVIII, 7, Début dans la vie, II, 370, etc.)

The only really admiring reference to David occurs in a letter to madame Hanska. After a visit to Versailles, Balzac exclaims:

Ce qui par exemple est beau comme Titien, et tout ce qu'il y a de beau en peinture, c'est le Sacre de Napoléon et le Couronnement de Joséphine, c'est la Bénédiction des Aigles ... Quel grand peintre que David! C'est colossal. ... (Et, I, 437; Oct. 20-26, 1837).

Strange to say, Balzac in no way condemns in this classic group Pierre Guérin, whose huge canvases seem today far more outmoded than those of David. Guérin's Enée raconte à Didon les malheurs de Troie (Louvre) is recalled three times by the pose of some woman (Bourse, I, 410, Cadignan, XVI, 332 and Béatrix, V, 115-116).

Another adherent of David was the well-known painter and teacher Gros, from whose atelier, says Balzac, "sortirent tant de talents différents" (Rabouilleuse, IX, 281). He plays an important

if silent rôle in Balzacian Paris as the teacher of Schinner, Bixiou and Joseph Bridau.

For Baron François Gérard Balzac's affectionate admiration is evident in La Rabouilleuse (p. 287), Béatrix (V, 77) and Les Employés (XIX, 4). In the dedication of the latter novel to the comtesse de San-Severino he writes: "... vous avez tant aimé ce riche salon de Gérard que nous avons perdu, et où se voyaient ... les illustrations européennes de ce quart de siècle." Balzac's correspondence also contains many references to Gérard's famous Wednesdays. Among those who frequented them and whom he probably knew there were Guérin, Stendhal, Forbin and Delacroix.¹⁵ The fact that Balzac, like Delacroix, attended this conservative salon may have had some influence in keeping him attached (in spite of his enthusiasm for the new school) to the classic masters of his youth.

There are in the Comédie humaine several allusions to paintings by Gérard--his "Battle of Austerlitz" (1810; Versailles; see Femme de trente ans, VI, 14 and César, XIV, 105), his likeness of Madame de Staël as "Corinne" (1822, in Balzac's day in the possession of Madame Recamier; see Louis Lambert, XXXI, 59-60), his "Daphnis et Chloé" (1824, Louvre; Ferragus, XIII, 69).

Gérard's funeral is described in letters to Madame Hanska (Et. I, 377) and to the Comtesse de San-Severino.¹⁶

The painter of his generation most often mentioned in the novels is Girodet-Trioson, best remembered for the pallid "Atala" in the Louvre. This canvas is cited in a letter to Laure Surville, where Balzac tells her he wants a scene in his Cromwell to be sublime "dans le genre de l'Atala de Girodet en peinture."¹⁷ Does not this youthful admiration for the neo-classicism of "Atala" give one some insight into a certain aspect of Balzac's tour d'esprit often incomprehensible to those who unduly simplify him as the "Father of Modern Realism?"

Many less remembered works of Girodet are mentioned in Balzac's writings--his "Chateaubriand" (Fille d'Eve, IV, 100),

¹⁵ Ancelot, Les Salons de Paris (Paris, edition of 1858), pp. 56, 61 and 62.

¹⁶ H. Prior, "Balzac à Turin," Revue de Paris (Jan. 15, 1924), p. 399.

¹⁷ Balzac, Letters to His Family, ed. W. S. Hastings (Princeton, 1934), p. 10.

his "Hippocrate" (Illusions Pt. II, XII, 121), his "Révolte du Caire" (Marana, XXIX, 62), his "Déluge" (Cadignan, XVI, 322), and his "Endymion" (Vendetta, III, 159) and Sarrasine, XVI, 430). There are several references, specific or veiled, to his two scenes from Ossian. One reads of the "air vierge" and "étoffes blanches" of Ossian's daughters in the picture called "Fingal au milieu de ses descendants" (Béatrix, V, 278; cf. ibid., p. 99 and Bal de Sceaux, I, 108).

Girodet is one of the historical personages who have actual speaking parts in the Comédie humaine, being Sommervieux' closest friend (Chat-qui-pelote, I, 22).

Thus numerous and varied are the allusions to those painters who had been the gods of Balzac's youth--Louis David and the "four G's." Throughout his lifetime they remained the symbols of painting to the great mass of the inartistic. Madame Camusot de Marville, for example, has never heard of Watteau, but she says confidently, "Je connais David, Gérard, Gros, et Girodet, et Guérin, et monsieur de Forbin, et monsieur Turpin de Crissé" (Pons, XVIII, 75). By 1846 even the admired Girodet had gone the way of the outworn and the mediocre.

But after all, these men had been the highlights of painting when Balzac first came to Paris, and even after he espouses the cause of the Romanticists, it is the older school, its painters and its pictures, that most often recur to his thoughts.

While there are in the novels fewer references to the Romanticist painters, still, the names of several members of the younger group are the subject of significant passages in Balzac's work. In one of his "Lettres sur Paris" he contrasts French art in 1830 with that of a century earlier:

Notre peinture est riche de talents dont le moindre vaut ceux de cette période vide et sèche. Où trouverez-vous, en 1730, un rival à Courier, à Boieldieu, à Rossini? ... Claude Gelée, Lesueur, étaient morts depuis longtemps en 1730; tandis que Ingres, Eugène Delacroix, Schnetz, Horace Vernet, Delacroix, sont jeunes en 1830 ... (M. Lévy ed., XXIII, 167).

In Une Fille d'Eve we find the Romantic painters among the pictures of Florine's apartment: "... une croquade de Decamps ... quelque tableau coquet d'Eugène Delacroix, une sombre figure d'alchimiste espagnol par Louis Boulanger" (IV, 118). Comparing the battles of the 'twenties to the public indifference to art in the 'thirties, Balzac recalls, in Pierre Grassou:

Quand, douze ans auparavant, la Courtisane de Ingres [his "Odalisque," 1819] et celle de Sigalon [1822], la Méduse de Géricault [1819], le Massacre de Scio de Delacroix [1824], le Baptême d'Henri IV par Eugène Devéria [1827], admis par des célébrités taxées de jalousie, apprenaient au monde, malgré les dénégations de la Critique, l'existence de palettes jeunes et ardentes, il ne s'élevait aucune plainte (XVI, 436-37).

The dates I have introduced show that Balzac telescopes into this retrospect the Salons from 1819 to 1827. Of the painters cited in these three passages, all save Sigalon and Eugène Devéria are also mentioned elsewhere in Balzac's writings.

Géricault, ill-fated morning-star of Romanticism, is named several times, and is called one of the "raretés de la peinture" (Pons, XVIII, 89). There are fewer allusions to Delacroix, none of which go so far to attest Balzac's admiration for him as does the dedication of La Fille aux yeux d'or (a dedication added for the Furne edition) as well as several references to him in Balzac's letters. He writes Madame Hanska of the Salon of 1834, where little pleased him: "... si j'étais riche, je me plainrais cependant à vous envoyer un tableau, un Intérieur d'Alger, peint par Delacroix, qui me semble excellent" (Et. I, 155, April 28, 1834). Posterity has in this case ratified Balzac's taste, in calling the "Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement" one of Delacroix' masterpieces.

Louis Boulanger executed in 1836 a portrait of the novelist in his monk's robe, a picture which was the subject of endless correspondence between Balzac and Madame Hanska, to whom it was sent. A quarrel between novelist and painter which followed the exhibition of this canvas was as short-lived as it was violent, for Balzac dedicated La Femme de trente ans to Boulanger in the edition of 1842. But when he saw the portrait at Wierzychownia, Balzac was horrified at its deteriorated colors--"les couleurs étaient ou mauvaises ou mal combinées, et c'est noir, c'est affreux" (Letters to His Family, p. 305).

Decamps is the subject of a long passage in L'Interdiction (VII, 151-52), describing one of his drawings, and of a paragraph in Pierre Grassou (XVI, 436) listing a number of his paintings which made a sensation at the Salon of 1839.

Of painters not in the vanguard of the Romantic movement, Ingres, Horace Vernet and Meissonier are the ones most often mentioned. It is interesting that in the "Lettre sur Paris" already quoted, Balzac draws no line between the painters frankly

revolting from Neo-Classicism, and those who with some modification continued that style. All were les jeunes, who were contributing to the glory of French Art. Ingres as well as Delacroix has had scorn heaped on his work--and profited by it (Grassou, p. 436). There are several other admiring references to Ingres (Lys, XXVI, 301, Firmiani, III, 368, Honorine, IV, 367), but Balzac was aware of the sterility of the color used by him and his followers, for he writes: "... L'erreur des ingristes est de croire qu'en remplissant avec trois tons, plus ou moins gris, une silhouette sèchement arrêtée, on fait preuve de sentiment et de gravité" ("Monographie de la presse parisienne," M. Lévy ed., XXI, 428).

Other painters in the classicist tradition whom he mentions are Léopold Robert, Ary Scheffer, and Chassériau. Robert's "Moissonneurs" (Louvre) arouses Balzac's admiration (Pierrette, IX, 57-58). That this picture was a favorite of the novelist's is evidenced by his possessing two copies of it--Mercury's engraving, and a copy done on a Sèvres vase.

A painter often mentioned both in the novels and letters is Horace Vernet. The many popular mezzotints inspired by his pictures seem to have wearied Balzac greatly: the "Death of Poniatowski" and the two "Mazeppas" should, he says, be forbidden by law (Pierrette, p. 39)!

A number of personal comments on Vernet, mostly uncomplimentary, are found in Balzac's letters. The most interesting passage gives a detail of his life as well as a good estimate of his talent:

Vernet ne sera jamais un grand peintre; il a tout, il est coloriste, il dessine, il compose, il a de l'habileté de main, il rencontre parfois le sentiment, mais il ne sait pas réunir ces qualités dans ses oeuvres. C'est un grand faiseur, voilà tout. Il n'a pas de génie, il le sent d'ailleurs. Il a donné sa fille à son Sosie, Delaroche (Et. II, 105: Jan. 22-26, 1843).

Meissonier, another painter après coup of the Napoleonic legend, is also frequently mentioned, though in far more complimentary terms than Vernet. Several times Balzac refers to his reviving the work of the Dutch masters (Et. I, 539, etc.). There is some slight allusion either in the letters or novels to other painters of Balzac's generation--Jules Dupré "notre plus grand paysagiste," Cogniet, Gérard Seguin, Gudin the marine-painter, Schnetz. Balzac's letters are full of references to two painters

with whom he was intimate at the two ends of his career--Auguste Borget, to whom he dedicated La Messe de l'athée, and Laurent-Jan journalist and amateur-painter, whom Balzac calls in La Cousine Bette "un artiste qui fait fi de la gloire" (XVII, 315).

It is perhaps ill-judged to close this study on men who were so little artists as either Borget or Laurent. However, it was through people that he knew intimately, rather than through those whose names are highest in the halls of fame, that Balzac learned most of the artist-character. With no direct evidence of where he acquired his ideas on art, it is reasonable to assume that it also was from the men he knew best, the Laurent-Jans and Borgets, rather than the Géricaults.

Before attempting to evaluate that knowledge, we must pause to study in some detail a novelette which occupies a unique and peculiar place in Balzac's work--namely, Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu.

II. The Problem of Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu

Before attempting to evaluate Balzac's understanding of art, we must face squarely the problem of one story which occupies a peculiar position in his work. In Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu we find as chief characters three artists--the youthful Poussin, who must choose between love of his mistress and devotion to his art, Porbus, his mentor, and the old painter Frenhofer. This last inducts the lad into the arcana of painting, first, while criticizing a work of Porbus, and secondly, while he uncovers for Poussin his own "Belle Noiseuse," a canvas to which the sage has devoted the best years of his life. In his comments on these two pictures we find pages of the most profound theory on the technique of painting.

Let us examine briefly the essence of Frenhofer's ideas. The object of painting, he says, is to transfer to flat canvas three-dimensional objects made visible by sunlight. This requires more than a mere photographic eye. Frenhofer thus criticizes a work of Porbus:

... parce que vous regardez de temps en temps une femme nue
... vous croyez avoir copié la nature. ... Au premier aspect,
elle semble admirable; mais au second coup d'oeil on s'aper-
çoit qu'elle est collée au fond de la toile et qu'on ne pour-
rait pas faire le tour de son corps. C'est une silhouette
qui n'a qu'une seule face. ... Je ne sens pas d'air entre ce

bras et le champ du tableau; l'espace et la profondeur manquent; cependant tout est bien en perspective, et la dégradation aérienne est exactement observée ... (XXVIII, 7).

This lack is partly due to the fact that the painter sees only what he has learned, not what is in front of him:

Votre main reproduit ... le modèle que vous avez copié chez votre maître. Vous ne descendez pas assez dans l'intimité de la forme, vous ne la poursuivez pas avec assez d'amour et de persévérance dans ses détours et dans ses fuites (p. 9).

Frenhofer then passes to the more technical question of how this effect of life may be achieved. He tells young Poussin:

Vois-tu, jeune homme ... comme au moyen ... d'un petit glacis bleuâtre, on pouvait faire circuler l'air autour de la tête de cette pauvre sainte qui devait étouffer dans cette atmosphère épaisse! ... Remarques-tu comme le luisant satiné que je viens de poser sur la poitrine rend bien la grasse souplesse d'une peau de jeune fille, et comme le ton mélangé de brun-rouge et d'ocre calciné réchauffe la grise froideur de cette grande ombre où le sang se figeait au lieu de courir (pp. 12-13).

Nothing is so striking as what Frenhofer has to say about light and shadow. Like Titian, "ce roi de la lumière, j'ai ... ébauché ma figure dans un ton clair avec une pâte simple et nourrie, car l'ombre n'est qu'un accident ..." (p. 17). He goes on to tell how, in his own "Belle-Noiseuse," he has obtained the effects he sought: "... au moyen de demi-teintes et de glacis dont je diminuais de plus en plus la transparence, j'ai rendu les ombres les plus vigoureuses et jusqu'aux noirs les plus fouillés; car les ombres des peintres ordinaires sont d'une autre nature que leurs tons éclaires; c'est du bois ... (*ibid.*).

Not only is shadow merely a tone of light; line, another fetish of painters, is only a convention:

Rigoureusement parlant, le dessin n'existe pas. ... La ligne est le moyen par lequel l'homme se rend compte de l'effet de la lumière sur les objets; mais il n'y a pas de lignes dans la nature où tout est plein: c'est en modelant qu'on dessine, c'est-à-dire qu'on détache les choses du milieu où elles sont, la distribution du jour donne seule l'apparence au corps! Aussi ... j'ai répandu sur les contours un nuage de demi-teintes blondes et chaudes qui fait que l'on ne saurait précisément poser le doigt sur la place où les contours se rencontrent avec les fonds. De près, ce travail semble cotonneux et paraît manquer de précision, mais à deux pas, tout se raffermît, s'arrête et se détache; le corps tourne, les formes deviennent saillantes, l'on sent l'air circuler tout autour. ... Peut-être faudrait-il ne pas dessiner un seul trait, et vaudrait-il mieux attaquer une figure par le milieu en s'attachant d'abord aux saillies les plus éclairées, pour passer ensuite aux portions les plus sombres. N'est-ce pas ainsi que procède le soleil, ce divin peintre de l'univers (pp. 17-18).

I have quoted at such length in order to set by themselves the high points in this remarkable treatise on the art of painting-- what M. Mauclair calls "la page prophétique de Balzac ... qui prévoit, en 1837, tout l'art actuel."¹ Here is foretold most of the revolutionary procedure not only of Impressionism but of Renoir and Cézanne as well. Such a passage alone should give Balzac as outstanding a rank among art-critics as he holds among novelists.

I think the reader will agree after the preceding survey of Balzac's allusions to art that nothing elsewhere in his work leads one to expect such a deep and even clairvoyant understanding of painting. Without having devoted any special attention to Balzac's comment on art, the Vicomte de Lovenjoul was so profoundly steeped in the master's work that he was struck by the unique character of this novelette. In an article entitled "Honoré de Balzac et Théophile Gautier. A propos du Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu,"² he raises the question: Is Balzac the author of this story, or rather, of the critical passages from which we have just been quoting?

Briefly, here are the facts concerning its publication. The novelette appeared in L'Artiste (Vol. I, pp. 319-22 and Vol. II, pp. 7-10) in July and August, 1831; later in the same year it was again printed with slight alterations in Vol. III of Romans et contes philosophiques. In 1837 it appeared for the third time, in Vol. XVII of the Études philosophiques. Beside the many changes in wording and punctuation that accompanied every new edition of Balzac's works printed during his lifetime, the 1837 form of Le Chef-d'oeuvre contained extensive insertions. About nine pages out of the present total of thirty were added at that time. Practically all of these additions are devoted to artistic theory. These passages Lovenjoul believed that Balzac had asked someone else to write for him. The instinct which led this devoted student of Balzac to such a surmise was, I believe, sounder than his subsequent reasoning that the unknown collaborator was Théophile Gautier. It seems strange that a student of

¹C. Mauclair, Les Maîtres de l'impressionisme (Paris, n. d.), p. 36.

²In Études balzacienes. Autour de H. de Balzac (Paris, 1897), pp. 1-88.

Gautier as well as of Balzac should have paid so little attention to Gautier's own art-criticism as to imagine him capable of writing the passages in Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu. A pretty fair estimate of Gautier's approach to art at the time when Le Chef-d'oeuvre was rewritten may be had by studying his weekly articles written for La Presse in 1836-37. No better example of the superficial nature of his criticism may be found than his comments on Delaroche's "Lady Jane Grey":

Une composition disposée comme celle de Jane Grey, de façon à ce qu'on ne puisse voir les yeux d'aucun personnage, sera toujours fautif et désagréable. Le tableau aura quelque chose de morne et de borgne qui gênera le spectateur sans qu'il puisse s'en rendre compte ... (Presse, Nov. 22, 1836).

Here are his reasons for admiring Delacroix' "Femmes d'Alger," exhibited the same year:

Une main emmanchée d'une certaine façon, un jet de plis, une courbure de tête, un contour atténué ou renflé, un mariage de couleurs, une coiffure d'une bizarrerie élégante, un reflet piquant, une lumière inattendue, un contraste de natures entre différents groupes, forment ce qu'on appelle une idée en peinture. Voilà pourquoi le tableau des Femmes d'Alger est plein d'idées, et voilà pourquoi aussi il n'y en a pas une seule dans la Jane Grey (*ibid.*).

It is difficult to believe that Gautier should have been writing over his own signature such trivial comment as this, and at the same time burying under the name of a fellow-author the illumined analysis put in the mouth of Frenhofer.

These articles in La Presse might, however, be written intentionally in light and popular vein, appearing as they did not in an art-journal but in an ordinary newspaper. If we consult other works of Gautier, however, we find a similar absence of profound ideas, even where the tone is serious. Passages relating to art in his novels are largely such comparisons of people or scenes to pictures as we have found so often in the work of Balzac. If one scans the many essays which Gautier devoted to his travels, to paintings seen in foreign galleries, in the Louvre, in current expositions--nowhere is there any criticism that approaches in profundity that in Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu. It is true that Balzac wrote Madame Hanska of Gautier: "Il est très original, il parle bien des arts, il en a le sentiment. C'est un homme hors de ligne ..." (Et.I, 497; Oct. 15, 1838). Written as they were in the year following the enlargement of Le Chef-d'oeuvre, these words are, in my opinion, the strongest evidence that can be produced for Gautier's collaboration. Well as they

fit in with the insertions in Le Chef-d'oeuvre, they are not supported by the evidence of Théo's own published work. He was by temperament a poet, with a strong visual and emotional reaction to sensuous beauty or horror. He was not a profound thinker or theorist. Of Gautier as a critic Eugène Delacroix wrote:

Il prend un tableau, le décrit à sa manière, fait lui-même un tableau qui est charmant, mais il n'a pas fait un acte de véritable critique; pourvu qu'il trouve à faire chatoyer, miroiter les expressions macaroniques ... qu'il cite l'Espagne et la Turquie ... il est content. ... Il n'y aura ni enseignement ni philosophie dans une pareille critique (Journal, II, 341).

This judgment is paralleled by the more recent estimate of M. Fosca on Gautier. After remarking that his own paintings are only a feeble imitation of Ingres, Fosca continues: "De plus, ses études picturales ne semblent pas avoir laissé en lui de traces bien profondes, car sa critique d'art ... demeure purement littéraire."³

No; whoever collaborated in the revision of Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu, it was hardly Théophile Gautier. The only other name that has been brought forward is that of Eugène Delacroix, proposed by M. Fosca in the article just cited. It is well-known that Delacroix was not only a revolutionary in the practice of painting, but a profound and original theorist also. For years he nursed the plan of writing a Dictionary of the Fine Arts, and left many notes for this unfinished project. His Journal furthermore is full of speculations on the art of painting. It is true that most of his theories concern actual colors to be used in depicting certain objects, distinctions that foreshadow the photographic observations of the colors in Nature made by the Impressionists a few years later. The speculations of Frenhofer, as we have seen, revolve around the creation of life, specifically of solid form, in the two-dimensional limits of canvas. But there are certain correspondences between Frenhofer's ideas and the reflections of Delacroix. On the unimportance of line, for example the latter says:

Le contour est aussi idéal et conventionnel dans la peinture que dans la sculpture; il doit résulter naturellement de la bonne disposition des parties essentielles (Journal, I, 460).⁴

³F. Fosca, "Les artistes dans les romans de Balzac," Revue critique des idées et des livres, XXXIV (Mar., 1922), p. 150.

⁴Edition Joubin (Paris, 1932), 3 volumes.

Again:

Beaucoup de ces peintres qui évitent la touche ... exagèrent le contour. ... Ils pensent ainsi introduire une précision qui n'est réelle que pour les sens peu exercés des demi-connaisseurs. Ils se dispensent même d'exprimer convenablement les reliefs, grâce à ce moyen grossier ennemi de toute illusion; car ce contour prononcé également et outre mesure annule la saillie en faisant venir en avant les parties qui dans tout objet sont toujours les plus éloignées de l'oeil, c'est-à-dire les contours (ibid., III, 19).

Concerning the importance of ambient atmosphere, Delacroix writes in a note for his Dictionnaire des Beaux-Arts:

Liaison. Quand nous jetons les yeux sur les objets qui nous entourent, que ce soit un paysage ou un intérieur, nous remarquons entre les objets qui s'offrent à nos regards une sorte de liaison produite par l'atmosphère qui les enveloppe et par les reflets de toutes sortes qui font en quelque sorte participer chaque objet à une sorte d'harmonie générale (ibid., III, 41).

Another point that corresponds with Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu is the matter of freedom in copying from the model. Says Delacroix, in criticizing Louis David:

L'asservissement complet à ce que lui présentait le modèle est une des causes de cette froideur ... il semble qu'il fût satisfait quand il avait bien imité le petit morceau de nature qu'il avait sous les yeux ... (ibid., III, 70-71).

A final quotation comes from a passage on Delacroix' idol, Rubens:

Je remarque aussi sa principale qualité ... c'est la prodigieuse saillie de ses figures, c'est à dire leur prodigieuse vie. Sans ce don, point de grand artiste; c'est à réaliser le problème de la saillie et de l'épaisseur qu'arrivent seulement les plus grands peintres. ... Titien, Véronèse sont plats à côté de lui ... (ibid., III, 308).

Since quotation becomes tedious, we will only refer to other passages equally interesting: on Line, in Vol. I, p. 299; on the fictitious opposition between light and shade (I, 468); on the relation of color to light (I, 418), and on the relation of color to line (I, 459).

Although we lack conclusive proof that the ideas in Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu are identical with those of Delacroix, yet I believe that the above quotations are more significant than the passages from the painter's works cited by M. Fosca. Furthermore there is a fundamental similarity both of actual ideas and of general tour d'esprit between Delacroix and the author of the inserted pages in Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu.

Readers of the Journal may protest that Balzac and Delacroix were not on sufficiently intimate terms for such a collaboration to have taken place. Delacroix complains again and

again of Balzac's novels, claiming that his descriptions of people and places were overloaded with non-essential details. Though he found them tedious, the painter continued to read them and to quote passages (generally of a philosophic nature) from the Comédie humaine. Looking back in 1852 on the Balzac he had known nearly twenty years earlier at Nodier's, Delacroix recalled the rising young novelist's defective teeth and "quelque chose de discordant dans la toilette" (Journal, I, 453). Neither these literary nor personal reactions tell us what were the relations between novelist and painter in 1837. After his youthful journal of 1822-1824, Delacroix kept no regular diary until 1847; he only scribbled notes from time to time in his sketch-books. During these twenty-three years, it is quite conceivable that he would have seized an opportunity to put into words the speculations with which his brain was always teeming--speculations that were just as well placed in the novel of a friend (or acquaintance) as they would have been tucked away in some tiny pocket notebook. The Journal, broken into two parts as it is, gives us no idea of what Delacroix was thinking in 1837, nor does it give the slightest clue to the relations between him and Balzac at that period. We know that the two had met in 1831 or 1832. A letter which M. Joubin dates 1832⁵ bears witness to the cordial relations and congeniality existing between painter and novelist at the beginning of their acquaintance. It seems less probable that a professional critic like Gautier would have collaborated in an anonymous task than that a painter who wrote only occasional articles for publication, but who was always haunted by the impulse to put his thoughts into words, should have taken such an occasion to formulate his theories of the moment. No matter how much more of the writings of Delacroix are brought to light, it is quite conceivable that the ideas in Le Chef-d'oeuvre will never be paralleled, for after he had once noted them down, even under another's name, the painter might well have felt no further need to express them. Whereas Gautier would probably have used them, consciously or unconsciously, in the task of working up weekly articles for the papers.

While the coöperation of Delacroix seems a more promising

⁵Correspondance générale de Eugène Delacroix, André Joubin, editor (Paris, 1936-), I, 342-45.

line for investigation than that of Gautier, there is a good deal to be said against the claim that anyone actually wrote the inserted passages for Balzac. In the first place, the changes consist not in one or two long insertions, but in many insertions of various lengths. Those which Lovenjoul would have us attribute to Gautier, that is, the passages on the technicalities of painting, are three long passages inserted into the comment on Porbus' "Marie Egyptienne" (Conard ed., pp. 7-8, 9-11 and 11-14), and another long discussion of Frenhofer's own painting (pp. 17-18). There are short changes also of a technical nature on pages 30, 31 and 32.

Furthermore there are many alterations not concerned with the analysis of painting, changes which would not have needed a more technically competent aid. Three passages are omitted after the two 1831 editions: a flight of fancy inspired by the word "indéfinissable," which came just before "Ce que la riche imagination etc." (Conard, p. 19) disappears; a rather elaborate comment on descriptions in literature is replaced (p. 6) by the description of Porbus' studio. Thirdly, the after-history of Porbus' "Marie Egyptienne" vanishes, to reappear in connection with an entirely different canvas, in another novel, Les Marana (XXIX, 64).

The most interesting insertions outside the actual discussion of the art of painting are those which develop the character of Frenhofer. In the first form of the story he is described as a sort of super-painter--"cet être surnaturel ... le type le plus complet de la nature artiste." For the young Poussin "ce vieillard était devenu, par une transfiguration subite, l'Art lui-même ..."

But the Frenhofer we read of in the later versions of his story is not the personification of art--he is rather its suicide, the super-artist who is too profound a thinker to be a creator. With this whole Romantic-Philosophical concept, Balzac was tremendously preoccupied in 1837. He writes Madame Hanska:

Massimilla Doni et Gambara sont, dans les Etudes philosophiques l'apparition de la musique, sous la double forme d'exécution et de composition, soumise à la même épreuve que la pensée dans Louis Lambert, c'est à dire l'oeuvre et l'exécution tuées par la trop grande abondance du principe créateur, ce qui m'a dicté le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu pour la peinture, étude que j'ai refaite l'hiver dernier (Et.I, 398-99. May 24, 1837; cf. Preface of Massimilla, M. Lévy ed., XXII, 528).

M. Montalée has well summarized this provocative idea:⁶

⁶R. Montalée, En lisant Balzac (Paris, 1925), pp. 65-66.

Il est en tout une mesure, la perfection a des bornes; le rêve mégalomane, aux proportions extravagantes, est un écueil de l'art; vouloir dérober le feu du ciel comporte une punition, ce fut le péché et le châtement de Prométhée. La hantise de absolu touche à la pathologie, la recherche en est vaine, le surartiste est voué à une radicale impuissance.

This concept of Balzac's extends not only to music, but, in La Recherche de l'absolu as well as in Louis Lambert, to the realms of science and thought. The indulgence of artistic speculation to the point of madness is brought out in Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu by a series of insertions describing Frenhofer. The very wealth of his knowledge of art and his eloquence in discussing it (in the inserted passages) mark him as a profound thinker. Scattered phrases not in the editions of 1831 set him apart as both a genius and a madman: " tout en ce vieillard allait au delà des bornes de la nature humaine" (p. 19). But, he himself admits, "le trop de science, de même que l'ignorance, arrive à une négation" (p. 18). This central idea is even more clearly put, with more of its implications, in the mouth of the practical Porbus. After admiring Frenhofer's great gifts, he says: "Enfin, il y a quelque chose de plus vrai que tout ceci, c'est que la pratique et l'observation sont tout chez un peintre, et que si le raisonnement et la poésie se querellent avec les brosses, on arrive au doute comme le bonhomme, qui est aussi fou que peintre" (p. 21).

Beside all these insertions stressing the character of Frenhofer, the actual conclusion of the novelette was considerably worked over between the various editions, the changes tending to focus the reader's sympathies on Frenhofer rather than on the romance of Poussin and Gillette. The passage occupying most of page 33, where the old painter is convinced by Porbus and Poussin that his masterpiece is a mere daub, was all inserted in 1837. The earlier editions had ended on the despairing cry of Gillette, "Tue-moi ... Je t'aime et je crois que je te hais déjà." In 1837 the next paragraph, "Pendant que Poussin écoutait Gillette ... Adieu, mes petits amis" (Conard, p. 34) was introduced, the story then ending on the note of suspense, "Cet adieu les glaça." In the Furne edition, Balzac more completely centered the attention on the final tragedy of the old man's disillusionment by adding a last sentence: "Le lendemain, Porbus, inquiet, revint voir Frenhofer, et apprit qu'il était mort dans la nuit, après avoir brûlé ses toiles" (Conard, p. 34). Les artistic, perhaps, than

the ending of 1837, but more complete, necessary, like a tonic chord.

As we look back at the changes made, chiefly in 1837, it is quite apparent that they are much more complex than one would have imagined from reading Lovenjoul's article. Far from being one or more long passages that might have been written for Balzac, they are many fragments, some long and some brief, some new and some changes in what already existed. Some are technical discussions of painting, others relate to the plot or to a concept of the creative process which Balzac was working out in other novels beside Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu. Furthermore, they are thoroughly incorporated into the previous text. To separate them from it is not to lift out some extraneous (if beautiful) growth; it is rather a question of unthreading a delicately woven mesh. The author of the inserted passages must not only have been entirely familiar with the story; he must have worked with the proofs or with the edition published in Romans et contes philosophiques in his hands, altering on the text, or, for the longer insertions, pinning sheets to the printed pages or proof. It is possible that someone other than Balzac could have done this, but less easy to imagine than the introduction of one or two technical passages as hors-d'oeuvre would be.

However, another element in the case has to be considered. Even in the first form of the novelette, published in L'Ariste, a germ of artistic criticism exists. Frenhofer says of the "Marie Egyptienne": "Elle ne vit pas! En la regardant longtemps, je ne saurais croire qu'il y ait de l'air entre ses bras et le fond de la toile." Then follows the vague sentimental criticism: "Je ne sens pas la chaleur de ce beau corps, et ne trouve pas de sang dans les veines. ... Les contours ne sont pas vrais."

Another groping effort to express the creation of life in paint is Frenhofer's word (in L'Artiste also):

Vous avez fait un admirable vêtement à votre femme, mais où est la vie? Une femme a certes cet air de tête, ce regard de douce résignation et doit tenir sa jupe ainsi! ... Mais où est le plus? Vous avez le moins ...

This vague complaint of lifelessness is made precise in the edition of 1837 by two and a half pages of insertion (Conard, pp. 9-11).

Still more interesting than these germs of artistic analysis in the first version is the fact, not noted by Lovenjoul,

that already in 1831 Balzac was seeking to improve the technical criticism in his novelette. While most of the changes and insertions date from 1837, alterations had already been made in the brief interval between the story's first appearance in L'Artiste and the second version published that same year in Romans et contes philosophiques.

Among the insertions of technical comment in this latter version is the following. Frenhofer says to Porbus:

Tu as craint d'être sec en suivant la méthode de l'école italienne, et tu as voulu empâter les extrémités à l'instar du Titien et du Corrège. Eh! bien! tu n'as ni les avantages d'un dessin pur et correct ni les artifices des demi-teintes. ... Tu n'es vrai que dans les tons intérieurs de la chair. ... Il y a de la vérité là (Romans et contes, III, 230).

In 1837 this same idea is developed almost past recognition in the long paragraph that occupies most of page 8, Conard edition.

The gradual development of a thought through three versions of the story is evident on comparing three forms of another passage:

<u>L'Artiste</u>	<u>Romans et contes ...</u>	<u>Conard edition</u>
Elle respirait! Ce matin, au jour ... j'ai reconnu mon erreur! ...	Elle respirait! ... Ce matin, au jour, j'ai reconnu mon erreur! ... Si j'ai trouvé le moyen de mettre des formes rondes en saillie sur une toile plate et droite, en com- binant la pureté du trait avec cer- tains effets pris aux peintres qui ont savamment char- gé de couleur les contours afin de les détacher du fond, j'ai encore des doutes sur la vérité de mes li- gnes. ... Oh! la ligne vraie! ... Le vieillard fit un pause (p.236).	Elle respirait! Quoique j'aie trou- vé le moyen de ré- aliser sur une toile plate le relief et la rondeur de la nature, ce matin, au jour, j'ai re- connu mon erreur. Ah! pour arriver à ce résultat glo- rieux, j'ai étudié à fond les grands maîtres du coloris ...
Je n'ai pas encore saisi la ligne vraie, la courbure exacte des formes de la femme. Le vieillard fit une pause (Vol. I, 26th livraison).		(Insertion of 1 1/4 pages) Je doute de mon oeuvre! Le vieillard fit une pause (pp. 17- 18).

In the first version Frenhofer complains that the figure he is trying to paint lacks the quality of life because the line is not true. In the second, he recognizes the rôle of color in building up form from a flat surface, but he still clings to "la

ligne vraie" as an essential element. In the third version, the importance of line has given place to an insertion in which its very existence is denied. Still, this third version is close enough to the second for one to say that the germ of the more elaborated idea exists in Romans et contes philosophiques.

Here is another series of changes of the same nature:

<u>L'Artiste</u>	<u>Romans et contes</u>	Conard edition
J'ai saisi la couleur, le vif, le <u>tranché</u> de la ligne qui termine le corps!	N'ai-je pas bien saisi la couleur, le vif de la ligne qui paraît terminer le corps?	N'ai-je pas bien saisi la couleur, le vif de la ligne qui paraît terminer le corps? N'est-ce pas le même phénomène que nous présentent les objets qui sont dans l'atmosphère comme les poissons dans l'eau? Admirez comme les contours se détachent du fond? Ne semble-t-il pas que vous puissiez passer la main sur le dos? Aussi j'ai etc. (pp.258-59).

Note how the clause "qui termine le corps" becomes "qui paraît terminer le corps"--a change as significant as the telling metaphor "les objets qui sont dans l'atmosphère comme les poissons dans l'eau" added in the last form of the story. The successive changes in these two passages are a good example of the mosaic of which the alterations in Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu are composed.

Still more indicative of the advance in the second 1831 edition is an insertion there which is interesting to compare with the 1837 form, as Balzac changed the passage considerably:

Romans et contes ...

Mais aussi, mon cher Porbus, regarde attentivement mon travail, et tu comprendras mieux ce que je te disais relativement à la manière dont les Flamands et les Italiens traitent la lumière et le contour. ... En dessinant purement la ligne d'après les enseignements du Pérugin, j'ai dégradé la lumière par des demi-tons que j'ai longtemps étudiés, et au lieu d'empâter le dehors de la ligne, j'ai disposé des ombres dans la lumière.

Conard edition

Mais aussi, mon cher Porbus, regarde attentivement mon travail, et tu comprendras mieux ce que je te disais sur la manière de traiter le modelé et les contours. Regarde la lumière du sein, et vois comme, par une suite de touches et de rehauts fortement empâtés, je suis parvenu à accrocher la véritable lumière et à la combiner avec la blancheur luisante des tons éclairés; et comme par un travail contraire, en effaçant les saillies et le

Approchez? ... vous verrez mieux ce travail. De loin, il disparaît. ... Tenez, là, il est, je crois, très remarquable (pp. 261-62).

grain de la pâte, j'ai pu, à force de caresser le contour de ma figure, noyé dans la demi-teinte, ôter jusqu'à l'idée de dessin et de moyens artificiels, et lui donner l'aspect et la rondeur même de la nature. Approchez, vous verrez mieux ce travail. De loin, il disparaît. Tenez? là il est, je crois, très remarquable (p. 32).

By comparison with the later version, the earlier one is vague and a trifle amateurish. But the very fact that the passage is non-existent in L'Artiste and is first inserted in Romans et contes ... shows a distinct effort toward explaining as early as 1831 how solid form may be created on flat canvas.

The story as published in Romans et contes philosophiques, though substantially the same as that in L'Artiste, is definitely a step, if only a short step, in the same direction as the more elaborate version of 1837. If an artist or art-critic collaborated in this latter edition, an artist or art-critic certainly had some influence on the second edition published in 1831.

How satisfactory it would be if the proofs of Romans et contes or of the first Etudes philosophiques turned up, or if a letter were found from Balzac to Delacroix or to someone else, clinching the question of who this advisor or helper was! In default of such positive proof, we can only risk surmises, both on the nature of the collaboration and the identity of Balzac's collaborator.

My own surmise is that the insertions and changes in the editions of 1831 and 1837 are not the connected work of Gautier or Delacroix or of any third person so far unsuspected, but that they are the outcome of conversation between Balzac and some critic or painter. My chief reason for thinking this is the integration of the changes with the story as it already stood, so that neither in content nor style do they appear an excrescence. Wherever possible without sacrificing the altered meaning of a paragraph, words and phrases are used over again. It is well-known to all who have compared two editions of any work of Balzac how tenaciously he clung to the same phrases, as though loath to waste them.

One can picture his unknown collaborator, interested in the first version of Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu, talking over the

story with Balzac, making suggestions here and there, giving Balzac ideas which the latter included when the story first appeared in book form. Then, when he was ready to publish the third edition, in 1837, he might have been struck by some discussion among his artist-friends, and have definitely addressed himself to this same critic to come and help him with a story whose technicalities had passed beyond his own competence. Here his mysterious friend may have sat beside him, proofs on the table, telling him what to change or add, possibly writing the longer paragraphs of insertion. That it was an actual collaboration and not an inserted contribution seems to me the only way to explain the intimate union between the changes and the rest of the story.

Who this collaborator was remains a mystery. Both Gautier and Delacroix were brilliant talkers. As we have seen, Gautier's critical writings bear far less resemblance to the speculations of Frenhofer than do those of Delacroix. It is easy to imagine that in talking with Balzac, or in writing material for Balzac to remold for his own use, Delacroix' far-seeing comprehension of his art may have furnished the basis for the technical passages in Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu.

Whether he suggested the insertions of 1831 or 1837 or both, whether Balzac wrote them at the inspiration or dictation of some other, one incontrovertible fact remains: they occupy a unique position among Balzac's writings. The dazzling, clairvoyant ideas of Frenhofer never penetrated elsewhere into his work. There are interesting passages on art in Massimilla Doni, in La Cousine Bette, in Le Cousin Pons, and elsewhere, but we do not find a trace of the ideas found in that brief and significant novelette.

Verily it is well named--for it is an Unknown Masterpiece.

III. Balzac's Knowledge of Art

In making a final estimate of the character of Balzac's comment on art, we must take care to view him against the background of his own period. The non-literary character of painting and sculpture, so fervently preached by art-critics in recent years, was a concept entirely unknown to the eighteen-thirties. Delacroix was as ardent a reader of books as he was a lover of music: his pictures are no less full of literary allusions than

those of David and his school had been. The community of ideas between the fields of literary and plastic art is evident in the illustrations of Nanteuil for Hugo, of Delacroix for Goethe's Faust, of Henry Monnier for the Comédie humaine. Furthermore, many leading writers of the day tried their skill as painters--the names of Musset, Fromentin, Gautier, Victor Hugo, Mérimée come immediately to one's mind.

Unlike any of these, Balzac was no painter; his few drawings are but crude sketches. Hence he does not approach art from the point of view of one who creates it. That his genius was none the less a visual one is evidenced by his strong impulse to visualize his characters as well as their settings. Where most illustrations of novels are a disillusion to the reader, the step from Poiret, Chabert or Pons to the illustrations of Gavarni or Monnier seems a logical one, so clearly are we already conscious of the outward appearance of Balzac's characters.

When we examine his taste in art we must, furthermore, not overlook the progress made during the course of his life, nor forget the three chief elements in that development--his artistic friends, his many trips to Italy, Vienna, Germany, Holland, and, thirdly, the growing enthusiasm due to his building up a collection of his own. Limited at first to the paintings in the Louvre, more recent works in the Luxembourg, exhibits at the current Salons, his acquaintance with various schools and masterpieces was rapidly widened by his visits to the galleries of Munich, Dresden or Florence. We have such a passage as the closing paragraph of Massimilla Doni as a record of his dazzled enthusiasm over the new world opening up to him. Perhaps more influential than a Delacroix or a Gautier was Madame Hanska, who when not actually traveling with him was writing him of her own trips, telling him what he should not fail to see.

For her pleasure he prepared the home in the rue Fortunée to be a treasury of pictures, statues and objets d'art. While in 1846 Balzac could still modestly write Thoré, "Je ne me connais pas en tableaux" (Correspondance, p. 555), every letter to Madame Hanska at this period shows him full of opinions and constantly increasing his knowledge by calling on more expert friends.

How much did he actually know about the paintings he was grumbling over at the annual Salon, admiring in Dresden or buying in Rome? As much and as little as most of the amateur collectors

of his day. He was familiar with the great names of the past, he had seen nearly all the masterpieces in the chief galleries (not including England or Spain), he knew the current opinions about most well-known painters and many anecdotes (including purely fanciful ones) of their lives. He was personally acquainted with most of the prominent French painters, sculptors and lithographers of his day.

When we consider the more difficult problem of what his enjoyment was based on, we see that his approach to art was that of the comparatively uninstructed enthusiast. He admired a great name, he bowed down to the gods of his contemporaries--to the Bolognese no less than to Rembrandt, to the "Four G's" as well as to Delacroix. For him, Raphael is still the "prince of painters," while Giotto is but a name. He renders lip-service to Velasquez, but enjoys Murillo.

The amateur of his day was a happier man than the collector of similar training today. No higher criticism, no inspection of finger-prints or of qualities of canvas or wood, no Berenson or even Villot had come to shake his confidence in the word of antique-dealer or picture-salesman. Balzac, like Cardinal Fesch a generation earlier or Baron Taylor in his own day, still believed the world contained an inexhaustible supply of Giorgiones or Velasquez or Holbeins, which could be picked up for a hundred francs by an astute collector like himself.

Not that Balzac was entirely insensible to the beauty of a picture or to the comparative value or charm of different masterpieces. He frankly enjoys the human, tender Raphael of the easel-pictures more than the painter of magnificent wall-spaces in the Vatican. Holbein's "Meyer Family Madonna" pleases him more at Dresden than the sacred "Sistine Madonna" of Raphael. He enjoys certain qualities in a painting: the golden color of a Titian, the evocative murk of Rembrandt. He savors every detail in the "Aurora" or the "Knight of Malta" he had recently acquired. Nor is he unaware of mediocrity, even in his own possessions: a Natoire, just unpacked, cuts a poor figure, he says, among his more choice canvases. He is, of course, influenced by elements that have nothing to do with the artistic side of painting--the pleasure of the chase in getting a bargain, the fact that it is his own, the opinion of more expert friends, the judgment that the world had passed upon the artist. Which of us is altogether

superior to these mundane considerations?

That Balzac was consciously preoccupied with the design-element in pictures I do not believe. But that must again be seen in relation to his day. The criticism of professional critics--those who reviewed the annual exhibitions, Thoré, Planche, Alexandre Decamps, even Gautier--was chiefly literary, moral, sentimental. None of them based their judgment on design. This was the day of Ruskin, not of Clive Bell, Roger Fry or Albert Barnes. "Significant form" had not come to trouble the slumbers of the art-critic. The nearest to a technical element considered was color, and even there it was largely a question whether color was pleasing to the eye (as in a Decamps), left out altogether (by Ingres and his school) or blazing aloud with the unfamiliar stridency of a Delacroix.

Consequently we may repeat that in his uncritical approach to art, in careless attributions or in literary, moral or sentimental judgments, Balzac was but the child of his day: better men than he (artistically speaking) had the same limitations.

His espousal of the new and not yet popular school of the Romanticists calls for comment. It was, I believe, due rather to his associations than to any far-sighted wisdom. He knew Delacroix and Boulanger, the Deverías, the Johannots, Gavarni and Daumier; the new school was their Cause, hence it became his cause also. His earliest admirations had been Guérin, Girodet and their generation, and even after his allegiance was given to the other camp, the best-known works of the Neo-classicists were often in his mind. Not that he was unqualifiedly for all the new men: he never accepted the popular chromos of Vernet and Delaroche. Was this also due to the influence of more discerning friends?

In one realm of art Balzac was no mere follower of the more learned--that is, in the portrayal of the artist himself. After all, in a novel, descriptions of pictures and disquisitions on painting such as are popular with Proust, Barrès or Maugham are a form of literary snobbism that may some day appear as absurd as Balzac's lucubrations on Animal Magnetism or Swedenborg. It is with the portrayal of character that the novelist is primarily concerned, not with showing his own erudition in literature, science or art. Balzac has given the world such unforgettable types as Pierre Grassou, Dubourdieu and Steinbock, Pons and Elie Magus. He has given such pictures of the artist's life as those

in Sarrasine, La Vendetta, La Bourse and La Rabouilleuse. In La Maison du Chat-qui-pelote he has shown the tragedy of incomprehension that lies between the respectable middle-class and the artist. Perhaps he has failed to depict fully a great artist. Joseph Bridau is less strikingly realized than Pierre Grassou. But characters with vices, limitations or weaknesses notoriously lend themselves to portrayal more readily than the supremely great, who tend, in Balzac as in most novelists, to seem artificial or even incredible.

At the opposite end of the scale from the mediocre Grassou stands another failure, but a far more moving one--the seer Frenhofer. Since the authorship of the critical passages put into the mouth of this mad genius has been so seriously questioned, one can hardly base an estimate of Balzac as an art-critic on the whole of Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu. This does not apply to the characterization of Frenhofer, who embodies one of the most profound ideas of Balzac. When thought reaches its full development, the novelist tells us, it produces in the mind of artist or thinker such disorder that the result is artistic or intellectual suicide. Whoever originated this deeply pessimistic idea, Balzac has assimilated it and realized it in fictional terms with extraordinary vividness in the stories both of Frenhofer and of Claës. Frenhofer's "Belle-Noiseuse," in which he fancies that he has embodied all his speculations on painting, but which is in reality only a shapeless daub, startlingly symbolizes the futility of mankind's age-long dream of stealing fire from the gods.

